

Railway Group Hopes To Resurrect Heber Tracks

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READY TO LEAVE the old depot at Heber City is this group of businessmen. They were taken along most of the 14 mile route the Wasatch Railway Museum Foundation hopes

to use as a scenic railroad. The engine seen here is an old yard engine, but the engine the foundation will use is a full size, picturesque steam engine.

By JERRY M. YOUNG

The last thing to be hauled from Heber to Provo over the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad tracks was the Christmas tree for the Whitehouse in 1968.

Since then the track has been rusting and shrubs and bushes have sprouted up between the railroad ties.

Oddly enough there's a group of men interested in resurrecting that dead section of train track and turning it into an active section of track again.

Principal Leaders

The group is called the Wasatch Railway Museum and Foundation, Inc., and they are located in Salt Lake City. The principal leaders are Jay R. Edwards, president, and E. M. McLaughlin, secretary-treasurer, both from Ogden.

Offering what support they can are businessmen from Heber led by Leon Ritchie, chamber of commerce president, and members of the County Commission.

What the group wants to do is to put in a scenic railroad, and run it for tourists. They would use steam engines of unique designs, one of which could be modified to look like an alpine type engine straight out of the Swiss Alps.

Face a Race

But the Wasatch Railway group faces a significant race, and the deadline is too close for any of the leaders to breathe easy.

The race is to see who will end up with the track on which to run the railroad.

The Utah State Highway Department owns the track. It acquired the right-of-way from the D&RGW last year for \$200,000. It also wants to remove the track and use the rails for another five mile section of track needed in another part of the state.



CROSSING PROVO RIVER people riding the proposed Wasatch Railway Museum Foundation's scenic railway route will be able to experience this and many other sights. The

Foundation expects to use covered, but open-air cars for full participation by the passengers.

Bids have been called for to remove the track from Provo to Heber City. The Highway Dept. has called for the bids to be closed and will open them and award the contract soon if no suitable offer is made.

Seek Use

What the Wasatch Railway would like is to have use of the track as it is now, for a period of three years. They hope to be in a position then to make payment on the track.

Their plan calls for a three phase operation. First they would operate a line from Heber to Wildwood in Provo Canyon. That's a 14 mile run and would take something like half an hour or so to complete the journey.

The second phase would see the development of a railroad line running from that original track to the Swiss Village, where a ski resort could be developed on the west side of the Heber valley.

Phase Three

Phase three would be the construction of a connecting link with Park City.

Other programs would be developed along the way, such as the museum of old trains, cars and equipment. They hope to build a detailed model of their lines and run model trains over them at a speed to coincide with the actual train.

There is also a possibility for the development of a ghost town kind of amusement park similar to Southern California's Knott's Berry Farm. Film makers have shown interest in the project in order to avoid having to go to Europe for railroad shots.

In all, the developers hope to retain much of the historic past by establishing their plan. They see it as an opportunity to show off some of the natural beauty of the state. They also see it as a chance to keep tourists in the area just a day longer, and that means an added boost to our economy.